

AR 12
M3H6

1.2
McC

AR 5

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
IN CANADA

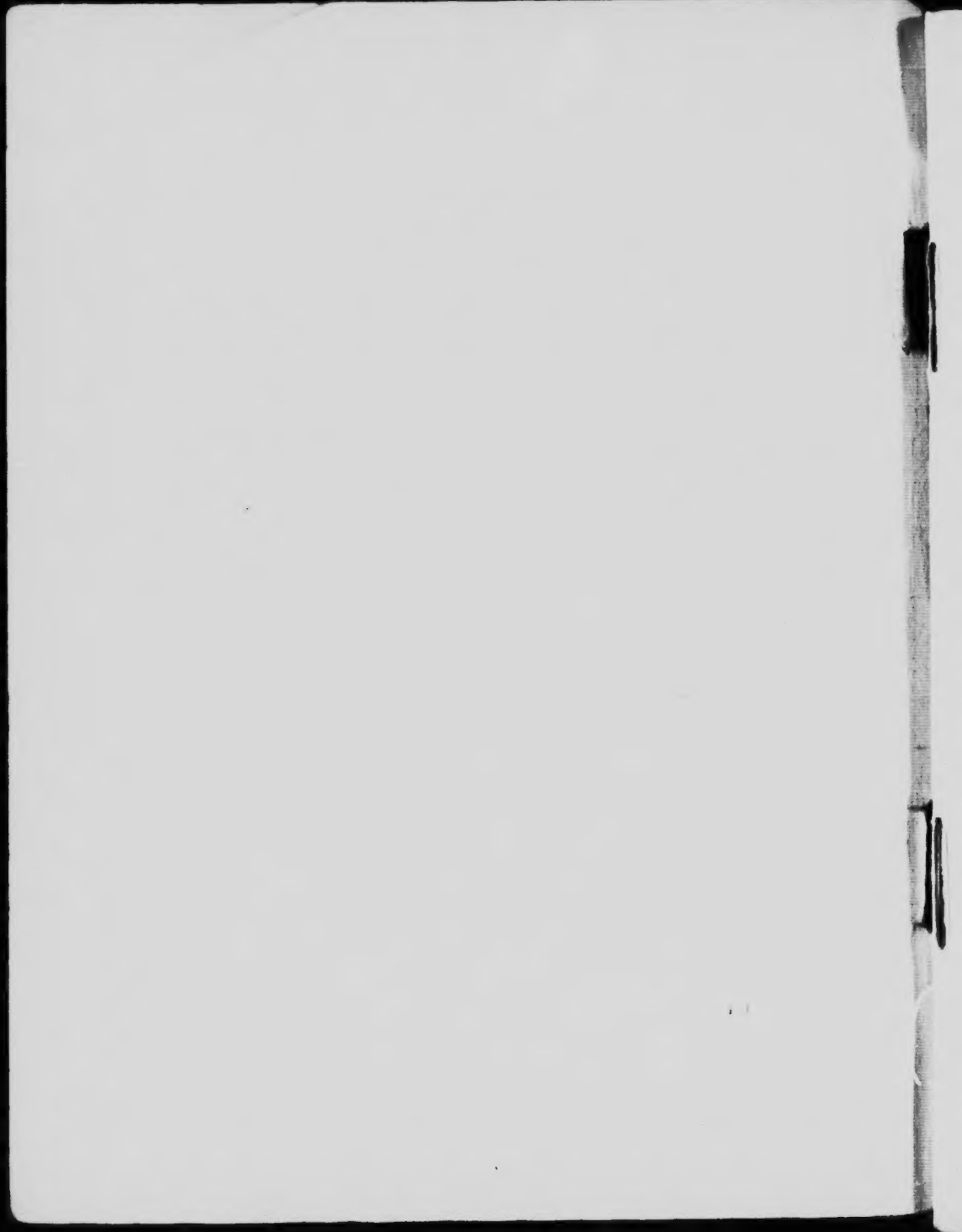
HOLY BAPTISM

BY THE

REV. T. B. McCORKINDALE, M.A.

*Approved and issued by the General Assembly's
Committee on Worship and Aids to Devotion.*

UPPER CANADA TRACT SOCIETY
8-10, Richmond Street East, Toronto



AR 1.2
M346

This little book is set forth under the authority of the Committee on Public Worship and Aids to Devotion of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. The writer has consulted the standard books within his reach; and to their authors he is beholden probably even more than he knows. It is difficult to make a doctrinal subject interesting; the writer has only tried to be simple and clear.

Abbreviations:

W.C.F.—Westminster Confession of Faith.

L.C.—Larger Catechism.

S.C.—Shorter Catechism.

All references to these Standards should be consulted and studied.

SUMMARY.

1. Baptism a Sacrament.
2. Mistaken views of Baptism.
3. The History of Christian Baptism.
4. The Mode of Baptism.
5. The significance of Baptism.
 1. A Rite of Initiation.
 2. A Rite of Cleansing.
 3. A Rite of Regeneration.
6. Baptism as a Seal.
7. The Efficacy of Baptism.
8. Improving one's Baptism.
9. The Place of Administration.
10. The Church's Duty to its baptised Children.

HOLY BAPTISM

BAPTISM A SACRAMENT.

Baptism is one of the two New Testament ordinances which the Reformed Churches recognise as Sacraments. Upon these our Standards place a very high value. They are classed among "the outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption," and with the other ordinances "which are made effectual to the elect for salvation. (S.C.Q. 88 and L.C.Q. 154.) A careful study of the Westminster Confession of Faith and its kindred documents will convince the student that the Divines on the whole favoured what would now be regarded as High, in opposition to Low Church views of the Sacraments.

MISTAKEN VIEWS OF BAPTISM.

1. The lowest possible view of Baptism is that which regards it as a means of giving a

child its name. This view cannot, of course, be held by the members of that Church which maintains that the rite should be administered only to those who profess a conscious experience of salvation: but it is not seldom to be found among members of the Churches that practise the rite of infant-baptism. Such a view denudes Baptism of its character "as an holy ordinance instituted by Christ in His Church". (L.C.Q. 162, S.C.Q. 92.)

2. At the other extreme of mistaken belief is the doctrine that Baptism, when duly celebrated by an ordained priest, using the proper form of words, is a regenerating rite when the recipient puts no obstacle in its way. This, it need hardly be said, is the Roman doctrine. All Christians are agreed in believing that the Sacraments both represent grace and apply grace:—but while the Reformed Churches give greater prominence to the former function, the Roman Church gives greater prominence to the latter. Roman Catholics may be said to hold that the Sacraments represent grace because they apply it: the Reformed Churches that they apply grace

because they represent it. The Roman Church believes that there is some divine "virtue" in the elements by which the Sacraments are at once efficacious and immediately convey the grace they signify. Thus it holds that a child dying unbaptised dies unsaved. It is therefore necessary that an infant be brought at once to the laver of baptism that in its cleansing waters the guilt of original sin may be washed away. To such a view our standards are utterly opposed. "The Sacraments become effectual means of salvation not from any virtue in them . . . but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of His Spirit in them that by faith receive them." (S.C.Q. 91. Compare also W.C.F. Chap. XXVII. 3.)

3. Here it may be convenient to meet the objections of those who, while they recognize the usefulness of adult baptism as an outward confession of the need of pardon and as a public engagement to be the Lord's, have yet serious objections to infant baptism—not on doctrinal but on practical grounds. They object to it because it is so sadly abused. That it is abused no one can deny. Many fail in the

needful duty of "improving their baptism." (L.C.Q. 167) — that is, they fall short of, or walk contrary to, the grace of baptism, and fail in the engagements it involves. That Baptism is often only an unmeaning ceremony must be admitted. But so often is the Sacrament of the Supper. Yet no one proposes to abolish it. So often is adult baptism. It would be folly to say that all who have been baptised by immersion or any other mode, have been faithful to the vows taken in the Sacrament. Baptism is no magical rite. It is a divine pledge that if we do our part God will do His.

The Westminster Divines stress the duty of "improving" our baptism. They express the hope and belief that even when the grace of baptism seems ineffectual it is not always so. "The efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered: yet notwithstanding by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited (i.e. applied) and conferred by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto,

according to the counsel of God's own will, in His appointed time, (W.C.F. Chap. XXVIII: 6. On the need for the right use of the Sacraments see also The Scots Confession of 1560 Chap. XXI.)

THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

Christian Baptism goes back to the beginning of the Church. In its long history as a Christian ordinance there has been no break. A glance at its origin and use in the New Testament Church is, therefore, all that is necessary. Christian Baptism was preceded by that of John the Baptist. John's baptism was not an initiatory rite. Nor was it a ceremonial purification by an accredited priest. Much rather was it a sign and seal of a moral and spiritual change. "It was an observance in which the participant registered his faith in God, gave witness to a spiritual quickening, and, through his repentance and confession, received a further blessing" (Clow: The Church and the Sacraments p. 73).

To this baptism Jesus gave His sanction by submitting to it. Unlike others who came

needful duty of "improving their baptism." (L.C.Q. 167) — that is, they fall short of, or walk contrary to, the grace of baptism, and fail in the engagements it involves. That Baptism is often only an unmeaning ceremony must be admitted. But so often is the Sacrament of the Supper. Yet no one proposes to abolish it. So often is adult baptism. It would be folly to say that all who have been baptised by immersion or any other mode, have been faithful to the vows taken in the Sacrament. Baptism is no magical rite. It is a divine pledge that if we do our part God will do His.

The Westminster Divines stress the duty of "improving" our baptism. They express the hope and belief that even when the grace of baptism seems ineffectual it is not always so. "The efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered: yet notwithstanding by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited (i.e. applied) and conferred by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto,

according to the counsel of God's own will, in His appointed time, (W.C.F. Chap. XXVIII: 6. On the need for the right use of the Sacraments see also The Scots Confession of 1560 Chap. XXI.)

THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

Christian Baptism goes back to the beginning of the Church. In its long history as a Christian ordinance there has been no break. A glance at its origin and use in the New Testament Church is, therefore, all that is necessary. Christian Baptism was preceded by that of John the Baptist. John's baptism was not an initiatory rite. Nor was it a ceremonial purification by an accredited priest. Much rather was it a sign and seal of a moral and spiritual change. "It was an observance in which the participant registered his faith in God, gave witness to a spiritual quickening, and, through his repentance and confession, received a further blessing" (Clow: The Church and the Sacraments p. 73).

To this baptism Jesus gave His sanction by submitting to it. Unlike others who came

to receive it, He had no sins to confess. But He hoped to receive through it a spiritual blessing. His hope was fulfilled. As He came up out of the water He saw the heavens opened, and heard a voice saying "Thou art my beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased". (Mark I: 11). His baptism was an epoch in His career. Through it He realized His unique relation to God, and heard the call to a supreme work. Like many others, but in a degree far surpassing others, He received through the baptismal rite a spiritual illumination.

The first reference to Christian Baptism is in John IV; 1 - 3. We are indeed told that Jesus Himself baptised not, but His disciples. It is enough for us to know that He sanctioned their administration. This sanction was confirmed in the great commission to go into all nations, teaching them and baptising them—"the marching orders of the Christian Church". (Matthew XXVIII: 19 - 20.) The references in Acts and Epistles are so numerous as to be almost embarrassing. Less than two months after the Resurrection we find the apostle Peter preaching to the penitent people:—

"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins". (Acts II: 38.) The converts of Philip the deacon in Samaria were baptised, "both men and women". (Acts VIII: 12.) Another notable conversion, that of the Ethiopian eunuch, was immediately followed by his baptism. (Acts VIII: 36 - 37.) "A certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias" was sent to baptise Saul of Tarsus. (Acts IX: 17.) Cornelius, the first Gentile Christian, and his fellow converts were baptised. (Acts X: 44-48.) Lydia "and her household" (Acts XVI: 15;) the Philippian jailor, "he and all his", (Acts XVI: 33); Crispus and his fellow converts in Corinth, (Acts XVIII: 8); and certain disciples in Ephesus who had received only the baptism of John, (Acts XIX: 1 - 7,) were re-baptised "into the name of the Lord Jesus" and into a more significant baptism than that for the remission of sins. In all cases repentance and faith were the conditions required—"repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ", (Acts XX: 21.) These graces, according to Acts, are not the result of, but the grounds for the administration of the Sacrament.

Now, a glance at St. Paul's report of the baptisms he administered in Corinth. He tells us that besides Cripsus he also baptised Gaius, and "the household of Stephanas" (I Cor. 1: 14 - 16.) He cannot remember whether he baptised any others, although tacitly he admits that he may have done so. Evidently in Corinth the administration of the rite was left to others; for which the Apostle thanks God, because in that divided Church it could not be said with truth that he had made disciples who should be called by his name. Other allusions in the Epistles to the fact of its administration and to the purpose of its appointment will be found in Rom. VI: 1 - 4; I Cor. VI: 12; XII: 13; XV: 29. 2 Cor. 1: 22; Col. II: 12 - 13; III: 1 - 2; Eph: IV: 4 - 6: V: 25 - 26; Gal. III: 26 - 27; Titus III: 5; I Peter III: 21. (All these passages should be consulted by the reader.) No need to trace the history of the rite any further. From the very beginning of the Church Baptism was firmly established as a Christian ordinance, and as a Christian ordinance it has been observed ever since. In New Testament times all converts were baptised. In many cases we

know that their households, within some of which there must have been young children, were baptised with them.

THE MODE OF BAPTISM.

We may concede that in New Testament times total immersion was the prevailing mode of administering the rite. The ordinance is an act of purification: and the cleansing of the soul from sin was vividly set forth by a plunge into the cleansing stream or pool.

It is also an act of regeneration: and the death to sin was most picturesquely represented by the total disappearance of the body beneath the waters, and the rising to a new life by the convert's return to light and air. But even in primitive times immersion was a desirable rather than an essential symbol. In point of fact no special mode is prescribed in Scripture. The mode may surely be held to be one of these non-essential matters of ritual in which the Church is free to regulate its procedure. Such liberty is allowed by the standards of the Church; (W.C.F. I: 6.) "As in the Sacrament of the Supper a morsel of

bread and a few drops of wine make a feast, so, too, in baptism the water poured or sprinkled is sufficient for the purpose in view" (Candlish). Indeed while it may be contended that immersion offers a more striking symbol of the cleansing of the whole man than sprinkling or effusion, it may be as cogently argued that the latter better expresses the outpouring of the Spirit, whose operation is not dependent on the amount of water. Our own Standards do not condemn immersion. They tacitly allow it, "Dipping of the person into the water is not necessary: but Baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water upon the person." (W.C.F.: XXVIII: 3. See also the Westminster Directory for the Public Worship of God, under the head of Baptism.)

Here we may notice a primitive usage which, so far as we know, is not now followed even by those who lay the greatest stress upon adult baptism and baptism by immersion. In the Apostolic Church the name of Jesus was pronounced over the convert in the baptismal act. He was baptised in or into the name of Jesus (I Cor: 1: 12-13. Gal: III. 27.

Rom: VI: 3 and passages referred to on p: 11). No doubt the invocation by the ministrant of that name which is above every name occurred either in a condensed prayer or in a declaration that now the convert belonged to Jesus and was dedicated to His service. But the divine name was invoked also, though perhaps not in all cases, by the convert. "Whosoever", says St. Paul referring to the baptismal hour, "shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved". (Rom. X: 13.) The apostle himself, as we know, was baptised "calling upon the name of the Lord" (i.e. the name of the Lord Jesus). (Acts XXII: 16.) Now what was the meaning of this invocation on the part of the convert? This: that at the most thrilling moment of his life on earth, he was confessing with his mouth the name into which he was being baptised (Compare Romans X: 9): loudly and exultantly proclaiming that in Jesus he had found a Master, Redeemer, Saviour, and loudly, too, claiming His protection. Professing that name which is above every name, and taking upon himself the vows of a new obedience, he was made a member of the Household of Faith.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISM.

Our last paragraph leads up to a discussion of the meaning of Baptism.

1. Christian Baptism, unlike that of John, is a RITE OF INITIATION. For Jesus did what John did not do, and did not intend to do. He instituted a religious society to which Baptism was the appropriate rite of admission. Only once does St. Paul, to whom we owe so much light on the doctrine of Baptism, present it under this aspect. He does so in a passage not without great difficulties of interpretation. Speaking of believers as members of the body of Christ, he says, "For in one Spirit were we all baptised into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit" I Cor. XII: 13. R. V. In these words there are two statements: (1) it is the possession of the Spirit that constitutes the convert a member of the Church: (2) it is at his baptism that the Spirit is given. This last statement provokes the question—How? One answer is that the Spirit is mediated instantaneously

by the rite—that the rite is magically operative, the water at once bestowing the grace it signifies.

Such an interpretation runs counter to what the Apostle says elsewhere. To the Philippian jailor he says: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Is it faith that saves; or is it Baptism? Is the Spirit mediated through a ritual act: or is it God's gift to faith? Undoubtedly in St. Paul there are things hard to be understood, and of these this seeming antinomy is one. Our attempts to resolve his statements into a higher unity may not be successful; but of this we may be sure that there was no antinomy in the mind of the Apostle himself. It may be that here he runs together in thought conversion, when the Spirit was bestowed and the baptism that in most cases immediately followed—runs together the beginning and the climax and consummation of a spiritual process.

We would not deny, rather we would affirm that at his baptism the convert received a fresh enduement of the Spirit. It was to

him a moment of the deepest spiritual significance. It marked a turning point in his life. It was a thrilling experience in which all his past religious history was crowned. And just as a fresh illumination and a blessing rich beyond compare come to the devout soul at the Lord's Table, so the Greek convert may have received and did, no doubt, receive a fresh out pouring of the healthful dews of God's grace at the moment of his baptism. But the first outpouring was at conversion.

Further, it has to be remembered that Baptism ministered, like the Word preached, is a channel of the Gospel, and because it is so may be a means of salvation. "The feeling in the primitive Church", says P. C. Simpson, "that Baptism had not less than an integral place in a convert's reception of Christ and his recognition as a Christian is very intelligible It was not so much part of the sacramental theory of the Church as part of her practical experience. It is part of the practical experience of the Church — even the evangelical church still. Missionaries for example, often find that it is really an element

in a man's conversion, that he be openly baptised. Now, the Church of the New Testament and of the sub-apostolic age was a missionary Church and also a persecuted Church; and it is not too much to say that a man living in these circumstances and faced with the choice between Christ and paganism was really and practically not a Christian if he would not openly receive the outward sacramental seal. Thus the feeling in the early Church about the importance of Baptism was something quite true in the practical life of the Christian Society." (Church Principles 96f.)

Baptism is still the door through which the adult convert enters the Church. "Baptism", says the L.C.Q. 166, "is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible church, and so strangers from the covenant of promise, till they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to Him, but infants descending from parents either both, or but one of them, professing faith in Christ, and obedience to Him, are in that respect within the covenant, and to be baptised." (See also W.C.F. XXVIII: 4.)

These words deal with two sets of people—those that are out of the visible Church and the children of those that are within it. For the former, Baptism is certainly an initiatory rite. Is it so for the latter? Do we baptise our children to make them Christians, or because they are Christians? In their case is baptism an initiation: or is it an ordinance to which they have a right? One of the proof-texts cited by the L. C. in support of its statement that the infants of believing parent are to be baptised, is that most interesting passage in I Cor. VII: 14 which reads as follows: "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the (believing) wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the (believing) husband." A difficulty confronted many members of the Corinthian Church. Some men were married to heathen women, and some women to heathen men. On the ground of differences in religion many Christian spouses wanted a separation from the heathen spouse. While he forbids Christians to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers (i.e. heathens), St. Paul yet counsels those Christians whose spouses had not followed them into the Church to regard

their union as binding, and as one to be dissolved only at the desire of the heathen spouse. The marriage contracted while both parties were heathen, he declares to be just as binding and as holy as any Christian union, sanctified as it is by the faith of the believing spouse. This is his judgment. And it is a judgment based on the admitted fact that the children of these mixed marriages are holy. (I Cor. VII: 12 - 14.) If one parent is a Christian, they are Christians. In virtue of their birth within the Church they are members of the Church. The offspring of the Church is clean. Not that he would imply that these children are personally holy, personally sanctified by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit: but that, born within the Church which is the body of Christ and the household of faith, they are embraced in the covenant of grace and are federally holy. He does not speak of Baptism: but he lays down the principle on which infant baptism is based. We baptise our children not to make them Christians, but because they are Christians. To withhold it, is to defraud them of their birthright.

The teaching of the Church on the subject of infant baptism as laid down in its doctrinal Standards is given even more amply and more tenderly in another of its Standards—the Directory for the Public Worship of God. It may be well to quote from this too little known document. “Before baptism”, says the Directory in its Baptismal Office, “the minister is to use some words of instruction, touching the institution, nature, use, and ends of the Sacrament, shewing:—“That it is instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . that the promise is made to believers and their seed: and that the seed and posterity of the faithful, born within the Church, have by their birth, interest in the covenant, and right to the seal of it, That the Son of God admitted little children into His presence, embracing and blessing them, saying, “For of such is the Kingdom of God” That they are Christians and federally holy before baptism, and therefore are they baptised: that the inward grace and virtue of baptism is not tied to that very moment of time wherein it is administered: and that the fruit and power thereof reacheth to the whole course of our life: and that outward

baptism is not so necessary, that through the want thereof, the infant is in danger of damnation." (Compare also the Order for Baptism in the Book of Common Order commonly know as John Knox's Liturgy.) It is in recognition of the fact that the child belongs to Christ, and that it his duty to train him for Christ, that the parent brings his child for baptism.

2. Christian baptism is a RITE OF CLEANSING.

Lustrations found a place in many of the religions existing before Christ, and in many of the religious communities of the Eastern world whose origin was almost coincident with that of Christianity. To this day the pious Moslem must purify himself by washings before offering his prayers.

The washings in the Christian Church had their remote type in "the divers washings" of the Levitical Code. These lustrations did not profess to remove moral or spiritual uncleanness, but only ceremonial defilements, such as those contracted by contact with a

dead body or a leper. The great prophets of Israel, who laid little or no stress on ritual ceremonies, used these lustrations as symbols of inward cleansing. Isaiah, thinking only of inward impurity, cries, "Wash you: make you clean". (Isaiah I: 14); and one of the greatest of the psalms records the prayer of the suppliant "Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow". (Ps. LI: 7 Compare also Ezek. XXXVI: 25 and Zech: XIII: 1). To the psalmist and others of the same mind, the outward washing was merely the symbol of that inward cleansing which only God can effect. Similarly the outward rite of baptism symbolises the cleansing of the soul from sin. "Ye are washed, ye are sanctified ye are justified." (I Cor. VI: II. See also Eph: V. 26.) Thus it emphasises (1) our need of cleansing. Throughout Scripture there runs the doctrine that what dirt is to the body, sin is to the soul. Scripture, too, asserts, much as modern science does, that we all inherit a tendency to wrong-doing. Therefore, even our young and Christian children require to be renewed in the spirit of their mind. It is for this reason we baptise them. Were

our children by nature pure, they could not with propriety be baptised, for we wash only what is unclean. The Sacrament (2) emphasises that just as water is the cleansing medium in outward washings, the Holy Spirit is the cleansing medium by Whom the inner man is cleansed, renewed and sanctified.

3. Baptism is a RITE OF REGENERATION.

We hope we have already made clear in what sense this term cannot be used. To remove any misconception let us say baptism is a rite of burial and resurrection. Of this aspect of baptism St. Paul makes much. In his Epistle to the Romans he supposes that a critic of his doctrine of grace may say:—If to multiply sin multiplies grace, then let us go on sinning. The mocking suggestion is at once countered. "We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein?" (Rom. VI: 2 R '7.) He then goes on to remind his readers of that aspect of Baptism which evidently was as familiar to them as it was to him. "Are ye ignorant that all we who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His

death? We were buried therefore with Him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life." (Rom. VI: 2 - 4. Compare also Gal. III: 27; Col. II: 11 - 12). Baptism, he would say, brings the convert into so close and intimate a relation with Christ, that it may be described as an actual union. And further, it expresses symbolically a series of acts, corresponding to the redeeming acts of Christ, through which the immersed has to go in a moral and spiritual sense. Immersion is a picture of death, our death with Christ, our death to sin: submersion, in which, as it were, we lie buried with Him, represents our death to sin as a real one: and our emergence from the depths of the water as from a grave, corresponding as it does to a resurrection, calls us to live as those in whom a new life has been implanted. In practice the Apostle was compelled to make a distinction between the actual and the ideal. But he never forgets the ideal. His constant exhortation to his readers is—Strive to be what you ideally are.

Be all your baptism means and represents. Live the new life. The W.C.F. (XXVIII: 1) reproduces all this when it declares baptism to be a sign of regeneration—that is a new birth, a new life, a new growth.

We have seen that to St. Paul Baptism is a graphic symbol of what is the vital thing, union with Christ, and union with Him in His death and resurrection to a new life. He imputes no magic power to it. "We so many of us as were baptised into Christ", (Rom. VI: 2) is to say in pictorial fashion, "we so many as believed in Christ", as is obvious from Gal. III: 26 - 27., where the two terms are used as equivalents. But he recognises that it is more than a bare sign. He sees in it a divinely ordained *Means of Grace*. It not only unfolds the implications of faith and interprets it, but it intensifies the faith of the recipient, and is thus an occasion of a fresh quickening of the Spirit. It is a means too, by which grace is added to grace. To St. Paul it is a symbol, yet more than a symbol.

BAPTISM AS A SEAL.

All our Standards speak of **Baptism as a Seal** as well as a sign. Now what is a seal? What is a seal to a legal instrument? What end does it serve? It adds nothing to the contents. All it does is to give a personal guarantee that the contract will be fulfilled. It is a personal ratification of a promise or an engagement, a personal confirmation of a truth or message. Baptism is thus a personal token of Christ's earnestness and goodwill. Candlish, (*The Sacraments* p.p. 58: 59) illustrates this use of the Sacrament in various cases in the Apostolic Church:—

“When the Ethiopian eunuch desired to be baptised (Acts VII: 36) it could not have been merely that he might understand the truth better, but rather that he might be assured of the certainty of the promises: and so we read that after his baptism he went on his way rejoicing, as one having a personal interest in the Saviour. So when, at the preaching of Peter, the household of Cornelius received the gift of the Holy Spirit, the apostle directed

them to be baptised, not to confer on them the new life, which they had already received, and not merely as a bare symbol, which they could not need, but as a token of the grace of God to them. Again when Paul appeals to the rite and meaning of baptism, in a passage that is not merely an exposition of Christian truth, but an exhortation to Christian duty (Col. II: 6 - III: 4), he plainly makes use of the Sacrament, not only as a sign appealing to the mind, but as a seal or token fitted to affect the heart. We are therefore fully warranted in regarding baptism as being, like circumcision, both a sign and a seal." In the singularly tender and beautiful post baptismal prayer given in its Order for the administration of this Sacrament, the Directory speaks of Baptism as "this singular token and badge of His (God's) love in Christ." Indeed when the Divines drew up this Form—the address and the two prayers—their hearts seem to have glowed with something of that love which filled the heart of the Saviour when He said "Forbid them not". The Sacrament of Baptism is the Saviour's love-token to His

Church, His love-token to the little ones in which He confirms His promises that He will accomplish their full salvation.

This we believe to be the teaching of the Reformation divines on the Sacraments as seals. Nowhere in Scripture is it said that they seal us: hence the use of the phrase sometimes applied to them, "sealing ordinances" is not correct. They are seals or tokens of a great objective truth—God's love to us in Christ, and a divine guarantee of the fulfilment of the promises. They are not even tokens to the individual that the work of grace has begun in his heart. The Holy Spirit alone can be the seal of an inward change. Again we repeat, that the Sacraments are tokens of Christ's good-will, of the divine pledges given in baptism, and guarantees that these promises will be fulfilled. The most familiar of all seals is the marriage ring. It is a seal of the man's love for the woman. It is more. It is a seal to the promises he has made. The minister asks—"What pledge do you give that you will perform these vows—have you a ring?" The man then hands the ring to the minister,

who returns it to him, saying, "In token of fidelity to these vows, this ring is given and received". The man then places the ring on the fourth finger of the woman's left hand. It is a token of the fact of the man's love. It is a pledge that he will perform the vows made in marriage. The giving of the ring follows the promises as a personal assurance of their fulfilment.

The particular divine assurance with which baptism is, in the New Testament, associated as a seal, is the promise of our complete deliverance from sin, our regeneration in the widest meaning of the word. It is in this sense as embracing also sanctification, that Calvin used the word. It is in this sense that John Knox and his friends, following Calvin, used the word. For in the Common Order, popularly called John Knox's Liturgy, we find in the Exhortation before Baptism these words — "Our Saviour Christ who commanded baptism to be ministered, will by the power of His Holy Spirit, effectually work in the hearts of His elect, in time convenient, all that is meant and signified by the same.

And this the Scripture calleth our regeneration, which standeth chiefly in these two points—in mortification, that is to say, a resisting of the rebellious lusts of the flesh: and in newness of life, whereby we continually strive to walk in that pureness and perfection wherewith we are clad in baptism". The Westminster Divines in their Order for Baptism use the word "regeneration" in exactly the same sense as Calvin and Knox. With them, too, it includes what is now generally called sanctification.

The need of such a seal as Baptism is obvious. The truly earnest soul knows that he has not already attained neither is already perfect, that he is far from possessing that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord, that his own efforts are inconstant and his own strength weak. He therefore longs for such an assurance of complete renewal as is given him in the Sacrament. The guarantee of a complete deliverance from sin is what he needs and what is given.

THE EFFICACY OF BAPTISM.

In considering the efficacy of baptism we must remember that the grace of God is not confined to "the outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption". On the other hand we must remember a saying of Calvin—that "God never cheats His people with vain and empty shows. "The statement of this truth rebukes the tendency to regard the Sacraments from the purely figurative or symbolic point of view. They are pictures, but they are more than pictures.

Like Calvin the Old Scots Confession of 1560 takes high ground. "We utterly condemn", it says, "the vanity of those that affirm Sacraments to be nothing else but naked and bare signs. No, we assuredly believe that by baptism we are ingrafted into Christ Jesus". (Chap. XXI.) This, the oldest, and in many respects the noblest creed of Scottish origin was never discarded by the Assembly of the Church of Scotland: for, in accepting the Westminster Confession, it declared that "it is in nothing contrary to the received doctrine

of this Kirk," (1647) thus acknowledging the authority of the old Confession drawn up by Knox and others in 1560.

The W.C.F. speaks of the "grace which is exhibited (i.e. conveyed or applied) in or by the sacraments". Chap. (XXVII: 3.) And in its chapter on Baptism (XXVIII: 6) when treating of the efficacy of the Sacrament, it declares that the efficacy of Baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered; yet by the right use of the ordinance the grace promised may be really conferred, and is as really connected with the ordinance as if it had been given at the moment of its administration. The L.C. speaks of the Sacraments as instituted to exhibit (i.e. to confer) unto them that are within the covenant of grace the benefits of Christ's mediation (Q. 162); and finally the S. C. speaks of the Sacraments as "sensible signs wherein Christ and His benefits are applied to believers". (Q. 92).

In considering the difficult subject of the efficacy of Baptism as laid down in our Standards, we must first of all take note that the passages

quoted, or indicated above, set forth Baptism as a covenant-sealing transaction. Just as circumcision was the seal of the Abrahamic Covenant, so Baptism is the seal of the New Covenant. By circumcision the child was recognised as a member of the holy nation. As a member of that nation he entered upon a glorious inheritance, for to God's ancient people pertained "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises", and whose also were the fathers. By his circumcision the Hebrew child had a clear title to all these privileges and promises. So also had the Gentile who had entered the holy nation by circumcision. But circumcision meant not only the enjoyment of privileges, but also the bearing of responsibilities, the responsibility of seeking that holiness of character and that righteousness of life which God had commanded His people. Similarly by Baptism the infant or adult is made a member of the Household of Faith, one of the family of God, and brought into covenant relations with Him. By Baptism we are made heirs of the promises; but we also come under solemn

obligations. We are like children of a noble house of ancient and honourable fame and glorious tradition, who ever hear sounding in their ears the compelling words "noblesse oblige". They remember not only the precious legacy of an unstained name, but the duty of living up to it, of being worthy of their sires. Baptism brings us into the noblest of all families. We must, therefore, live worthy of our great inheritance. Like St. Paul, we should make it our one ambition to be well pleasing unto Christ. (2 Cor. V: 9.) It is so high an ambition that in struggling to reach it, sometimes our heart fails, and we despair of ever becoming like our blessed Lord. At such a time let us recall our baptismal hour with all its promises of grace to help in time of need. Let us remember it is God's pledge that when we do our part He is ever ready to do His. There has never been any doubt in the mind of the Church that He will fulfil His part of the contract. It is by thus falling back upon the promises and pledges of God given in the Sacrament, through which also we have received a title to their fulfilment, that our Baptism can become efficacious to us. "Falling back

upon the promises" is an old, old phrase, coined in the mint of Christian experience. Let us not only fall back upon the promises, but also on the tokens and seals of them given in the holy Sacrament of Baptism.

This falling back the Westminster Divines would include under the head of "improving our baptism", of whose necessity they make so much. For the divers ways in which it may be done the reader is referred to L. C. Q.: 167.

THE PLACE OF ADMINISTRATION.

Presbyterianism has always objected to a hole and corner administration of the Sacrament. "It is evident", says the Common Order (Knox), "that the Sacraments are not ordained of God to be used in private corners . . but left to the congregation Therefore the infant that is to be baptised should be brought to the church on the day appointed to common prayer and preaching." The Directory likewise enjoins that the Sacrament be administered "in the place of public worship,

and in the face of the congregation". The words quoted from the Common Order give the reasons for this injunction—Baptism is a Sacrament of the Church. Its character as a Sacrament is whittled away when it is administered after the congregation has dispersed, in the presence of the choir and an elder or two. Its character as a Sacrament is almost destroyed when it is administered in private, though of course that is sometimes necessary. Baptism is not an individual act either of the celebrant or the parent—but a corporate act of the Church. It is a real degradation of the Sacrament, when the congregation considers itself spectators rather than worshippers and partakers in what is done. We worship when we look back upon our own baptism, and recall that in it God embraced us in the arms of His mercy: when we remember how far short we have fallen of the grace of Baptism, and how little we have done to improve our Baptism. We worship when we remember that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sins, and that in the Sacrament God has given us a promise of our complete regeneration. We

worship when we remember that Jesus is the true celebrant, and that once more He has taken a little child into His arms and blessed him. We worship when we remember that, like the Holy Communion, this Sacrament is no less a Sacrament of God's love, for in it He claims the child as His child and promises to be his Father and Saviour. We have in this Sacrament such a sermon as no living tongue can preach. We have the gospel of God's love pictured forth, and, if we may say so with reverence, acted in the presence of His people.

Is not this such a sermon as goes home to the heart of every Christian parent? Does the Sacrament not give him the very assurances for which, as a parent, he longs?

THE DUTY OF THE CHURCH TO ITS BAPTISED CHILDREN.

Up till now we have been expounding the doctrine of the Church regarding this Sacrament. We would come short of our duty did we not point out the responsibility of the Church to its baptised children.

1. The growing child should be told of his own baptism and its meaning—that it speaks of a divine love that took thought of him from his unconscious infancy—a love stronger, deeper, more lasting than that of even the fondest parent. It will thus remind him that if he at all love the Saviour, the Saviour first loved him, giving His precious blood to cleanse him, and sending His Holy Spirit to sanctify him. He will see in it a divine pledge to a divine promise, that Christ his Saviour will accomplish his complete salvation. It is not difficult to see that by such teaching the Sacrament will become a real means of grace to him.

2. The Church must teach him the duties and engagements involved in baptism—remind him that One is his Master, even Christ.

3. It must teach him the truths and facts of our Christian religion as given in the Bible. The Church endeavours to fulfil this duty by its Sabbath Schools and Bible Classes. The instruction given in these is by no means adequate, or nearly adequate.

4. The Church has therefore rightly delegated the instruction of its young members to their parents. No one has the same strong motives, the same opportunities, the same solemn responsibilities as they have. The Church lays this duty upon every Christian parent, saying, "Take this child and train him for Christ." Many of us are ready to acknowledge that we would never have known the Bible but for the teaching of the home. The immortal stories in Genesis, of Ruth, Samuel, Saul, David and Jonathan, Jesus and the other great characters of Scripture were read again and again. There was no attempt to point the moral. The stories were allowed to shine out in their own clear light. There was not even much attempt at memory work, otherwise the hour would not, perhaps, have been so enjoyable. The Ten Commandments, the twenty-third Psalm, the Beatitudes, the Lord's Prayer, I Cor. XIII, and a few of the paraphrases were about all we were compelled to memorise. This Bible knowledge along with a godly example is the best legacy any parent can leave his children.

1. The growing child should be told of his own baptism and its meaning—that it speaks of a divine love that took thought of him from his unconscious infancy—a love stronger, deeper, more lasting than that of even the fondest parent. It will thus remind him that if he at all love the Saviour, the Saviour first loved him, giving His precious blood to cleanse him, and sending His Holy Spirit to sanctify him. He will see in it a divine pledge to a divine promise, that Christ his Saviour will accomplish his complete salvation. It is not difficult to see that by such teaching the Sacrament will become a real means of grace to him.

2. The Church must teach him the duties and engagements involved in baptism—remind him that One is his Master, even Christ.

3. It must teach him the truths and facts of our Christian religion as given in the Bible. The Church endeavours to fulfil this duty by its Sabbath Schools and Bible Classes. The instruction given in these is by no means adequate, or nearly adequate.

4. The Church has therefore rightly delegated the instruction of its young members to their parents. No one has the same strong motives, the same opportunities, the same solemn responsibilities as they have. The Church lays this duty upon every Christian parent, saying, "Take this child and train him for Christ." Many of us are ready to acknowledge that we would never have known the Bible but for the teaching of the home. The immortal stories in Genesis, of Ruth, Samuel, Saul, David and Jonathan, Jesus and the other great characters of Scripture were read again and again. There was no attempt to point the moral. The stories were allowed to shine out in their own clear light. There was not even much attempt at memory work, otherwise the hour would not, perhaps, have been so enjoyable. The Ten Commandments, the twenty-third Psalm, the Beatitudes, the Lord's Prayer, I Cor. XIII, and a few of the paraphrases were about all we were compelled to memorise. This Bible knowledge along with a godly example is the best legacy any parent can leave his children.

The home is the foundation cell of the Church. Every Christian family, as we are so often reminded in the New Testament, is the Church in miniature. It is the household Church. Parents and children are members of that Church. The Christian atmosphere should pervade it. Christian prayer and praise should be offered in it, and Christian instruction given by its heads, as Christian instruction is given in the wider Church by its ministers and teachers. Were this done, the children who at their birth are only federally holy—holy as belonging to the holy nation—would, with growing years, become personally holy and sanctified within by the working of Christ's Spirit.

PRAYERS TO BE SAID AT FAMILY WORSHIP

(1)

BEFORE BAPTISM

Most gracious God, we give thee thanks for all Thy goodness, and especially for the precious gift Thow hast bestowed upon this home: and as this day we present our child to Christ our Lord in Holy Baptism, we pray that we may do it in earnestness and faith, and may ever have grace to fulfil our vows and bring *him* up faithfully and lovingly for Thee. Baptise *him* with Thy Holy Spirit, we beseech Thee, and receive *him* into the church of Christ. Grant that *his* name may be written in the Lamb's book of life, that *he* may grow in grace and in the knowledge of *his* Lord and Saviour, and that, guided in the way of Salvation, *he* may persevere therein to the end, and attain to the full victory of life: through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

AFTER A BAPTISM.

Heavenly Father, who hast given us grace to dedicate our child to Thee in Holy Baptism, we thank Thee that our blessed Lord has laid His hand on *him* in blessing and sealed *him* for His Own. Bless *him*, we beseech Thee, now and evermore. Guard *him* from all evil, shield *him* from every danger, and deliver *him* in every time of temptation. Spare *him*, we enbreat Thee; and give *him* grace in due time to take upon *himself* in earnest faith the vows that have been taken in *his* name, and to come to the Holy Table of the Lord. May *he* witness a good confession, and live as a faithful member of the Church of Christ. May the Holy Spirit impart to *him* wisdom, holiness, light, and strength, that *he* may never fall away from Thee, but may have *his* portion with Thine own in glory everlasting: through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The above are from Prayers for Divine Service: Church of Scotland.

PUBLICATION OF THE COMMITTEE
ON PUBLIC WORSHIP
AND AIDS TO DEVOTION.

BOOK OF COMMON ORDER.

SERVICE HELPS FOR PRESBYTERIAN
GROUPS. Containing four Sunday Services,
a Sunday School Service and a Burial Service.

THE LORD'S SUPPER. A manual for First
Communicants. The Rev. A.M. GORDON, D.D.

THE HOLY MINISTRY. W. W. BRYDEN,
M.A. (In preparation).

HOLY BAPTISM. THE REV. T. B.
McCORKINDALE, M.A.

CONSOLATION FOR THE BEREAVED.
THE REV. J. B. MACLEAN, D.D. (In prep.)

A COMPANION TO SERVICE HELPS;
Containing Psalms and Hymns for use in
Summer Camps, Surveying Parties, etc.
THE REV. J. B. MACLEAN, D.D. (In
preparation).

FEED MY LAMBS OR RELIGION IN THE
HOME. Suggestions for Parents. (In prep.)